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ROLE OF WOMEN IN ARECANUT CULTIVATION IN DAVANAGERE DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of women in arecanut cultivation in the Davanagere district of Karnataka, India. Areca nut, also known as betel nut, is a prominent cash crop in this region, and women's participation is integral to its cultivation and success. Through a comprehensive exploration of women's involvement, this research sheds light on their contributions at various stages of arecanut farming, encompassing seed selection, nursery management, transplantation, weeding, harvesting, processing, sorting, grading, marketing, and even value addition activities. Additionally, this study investigates the socio-economic impact of women's engagement in arecanut cultivation, highlighting their significant role in household income generation and community development.

Keywords: *Role of women, Arecanut cultivation, Women's participation, Socio-economic impact, Community development.*

INTRODUCTION

Arecanut, also known as betel nut, holds significant economic and cultural value in Karnataka's Davanagere district, India, where it has deep roots in generational traditions. Despite the perception of arecanut farming as male-dominated, women play vital roles in all aspects of cultivation. This study aims to highlight women's crucial contributions to arecanut farming, spanning from seed selection to marketing, essential for rural livelihoods and broader socio-economic development. Examining women's involvement in depth, the research delves into their tasks, challenges, and impact on household incomes and community dynamics, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and empowering women in rural agriculture. Additionally, it advocates for gender-inclusive policies to further enhance women's roles and preserve this agricultural tradition in Davanagere.

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OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the socio-economic status of women engaged in arecanut cultivation.
2. To evaluate the depth of women's participation in arecanut cultivation within Davanagere district.
3. To identify and analyze the primary challenges and impediments confronted by women in this field.
4. To propose strategies for the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality in arecanut cultivation.

HYPOTHESIS

Women play a significant role in arecanut cultivation in Davanagere District, actively participating in various stages of the farming process. However, their full potential and contributions may be constrained by gender-related challenges and barriers. By identifying and addressing these challenges through gender-empowering strategies, women's participation can be enhanced, leading to increased productivity and sustainability in arecanut farming in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employs both primary and secondary methods, focusing on women's studies perspectives. Primary data collection involved direct interactions with 161 individuals engaged in arecanut cultivation. Secondary data from government reports and academic studies provide contextual insights. The research framework emphasizes gender dynamics and women's experiences in arecanut cultivation. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the study aims for a comprehensive understanding, integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses. Prioritizing a gender-sensitive perspective is crucial for illuminating women's roles and challenges in this agricultural domain, fostering a more inclusive exploration.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN ARECANUT CULTIVATION

The challenges faced by women in arecanut cultivation in Davanagere District, Karnataka, are multifaceted and deeply rooted in societal norms and structural inequalities. Limited access to land inhibits women from expanding their cultivation and engaging in profitable farming activities, while unequal access to resources deprives them of essential inputs and technology, hindering productivity. Traditional gender roles confine women to specific tasks, limiting their involvement in decision-making and higher-value activities, while balancing household responsibilities with agricultural labor creates time constraints.

Furthermore, limited access to tailored training and extension services hampers their adoption of improved farming practices and sustainable methods. Challenges in market access and fair pricing, coupled with vulnerability to climate change and market fluctuations, pose economic risks. Additionally, health

and safety concerns, including exposure to pesticides without adequate protection, threaten women's well-being and productivity. Despite their significant contributions, women's roles may go unrecognized, and they may face gender-based violence in agricultural settings, further marginalizing their participation.

To address these challenges and promote gender equality, gender-sensitive strategies are essential. Equitable access to resources, training, decision-making power, and market opportunities must be ensured. Empowering women and recognizing their contributions can enhance productivity and sustainability in arecanut cultivation, ultimately improving the well-being of women in the agricultural sector of Davanagere district.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Age group wise Distribution of the Respondent

Sl. No	Age	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Below 29	26	16.1
2.	30-39	65	40.4
3.	40 – 49	49	30.4
4.	Above 50	21	13.1
Total		**161**	**100**

The data illustrates the age distribution of 161 surveyed individuals, with 40.4% falling in the 30-39 age range, indicating a significant presence of individuals in their thirties. Respondents below 29 years old constitute 16.1%, reflecting a smaller representation of younger individuals. The 40-49 age group accounts for 30.4%, showing a substantial portion in their forties. Those above 50 represent 13.1%, indicating a notable presence beyond 50. Overall, the data offers insights valuable for targeted strategies tailored to specific age groups.

Table 2: Details of House Types

Sl. No	Type of House	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Pacca	73	45.3
2.	Katcha	52	32.3
3.	Hut	28	17.4
4.	No House	8	5
Total		**161**	**100**

The data depicts the housing distribution among 161 surveyed individuals, with "Pacca" houses being most prevalent at 45.3%, indicating a majority in permanent structures. "Katcha" houses follow at 32.3%, representing less durable housing. "Hut" dwellings account for 17.4%, signifying simpler, temporary homes. Additionally, 5% reported having no house, suggesting housing challenges within the population. These insights underscore the need for tailored housing and infrastructure development strategies to address diverse housing needs effectively.

The provided table-3 outlines the distribution of respondents based on their level of education in a surveyed population of 161 individuals. The data reveals a diverse educational landscape among the respondents, with various

levels of educational attainment represented.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Level of Education

Sl. No	Educational qualification	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Illiterate	28	17.4
2.	Primary School	26	16.1
3.	High School	15	9.3
4.	Pre-University	33	20.5
5.	UG	22	13.7
6.	PG	6	3.7
7.	ITI / Diploma	25	15.5
8.	Professional Courses	6	3.7
Total		**161**	**100**

The largest group consists of respondents with pre-university education, comprising 20.5% of the total, followed closely by those with primary school education and those pursuing ITI/Diploma programs, each representing 16.1% and 15.5%, respectively. Notably, a smaller proportion of respondents have achieved higher education qualifications, with undergraduate and postgraduate levels accounting for 13.7% and 3.7%, respectively. Additionally, 9.3% of respondents have completed high school education. This distribution highlights the varied educational backgrounds within the surveyed population, underscoring the importance of considering diverse educational levels when analyzing survey results or designing interventions tailored to the community's educational needs.

Table 4: Member of any Village Organisation

Sl. No	Member of Village Organisation	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Panchayath	6	3.7
2.	Co-operative Society	63	39.1
3.	BhajanaMandal	19	11.8
4.	Marketing Society	20	12.4
5.	Social Organization	53	32.9
Total		**161**	**100**

The data illustrates the involvement of 161 respondents in village organizations, revealing diverse community engagement. "Co-operative Societies" attract the highest participation at 39.1%, emphasizing collective economic and social endeavors. "Social Organizations" follow closely at 32.9%, indicating significant involvement in community welfare. "Marketing Societies" and "Bhajana Mandal" represent economic and cultural aspects, with 12.4% and 11.8% participation, respectively. A smaller proportion, 3.7%, engages with the "Panchayath," indicating governance-related activities. This comprehensive overview informs community development strategies, aiding policymakers in leveraging existing social and economic networks. Tailored programs can thus address diverse community needs, fostering inclusive development initiatives.

Table 5: Annual Income from Land

Sl. No	Annual Income (Rs.)Per annum	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Below 100000	7	4.3
2.	100001-130000	35	21.7
3.	130001– 160001	40	24.8
4.	160001– 190000	27	16.8
5.	190001– 220000	33	20.5
6.	Above 220001	19	11.8
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 5 illustrates the annual income from land of 161 respondents, categorized into six income brackets. The majority of respondents fall into the income brackets of 100,001-130,000 (21.7%) and 130,001-160,000 (24.8%). Income brackets from 160,001-190,000 and 190,001-220,000 represent 16.8% and 20.5% of respondents, respectively. The lowest income bracket, below 100,000, comprises 4.3% of respondents. The highest income bracket, above 220,001, includes 11.8% of respondents. Overall, the data provides insights into the distribution of annual income from land among the surveyed population, highlighting variations in income levels.

Table 6: Problems Facing while Arecanut Cultivation

Sl. No	Problems facing while Arecanut cultivation	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No water in proper cultivation time	72	44.7
2.	Flood	47	29.2
3.	Drought	4	2.5
4.	Financial	38	23.6
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 6 delineates the challenges encountered during arecanut cultivation among 161 respondents. The most prevalent issue is the lack of water during proper cultivation time, reported by 44.7% of respondents. Floods pose a significant challenge as well, affecting 29.2% of respondents. Drought, though less frequent, impacts 2.5% of respondents. Financial constraints are also notable, with 23.6% of respondents citing financial issues. This data provides a comprehensive overview of the primary challenges faced by arecanut cultivators, emphasizing the critical importance of addressing water scarcity, flood management, drought resilience, and financial support within the cultivation sector.

Table 8: Factors Affecting Arecanut Cultivation

Sl. No	factors affecting Arecanut cultivation	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Social factors	9	5.6
2.	Economic factors	54	33.5
3.	Environmental factor	86	53.4
4.	Political factors	5	3.1
5.	Cultural factor	7	4.3
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 8 delineates the factors impacting arecanut cultivation among 161 respondents. The majority of respondents, 53.4%, highlight environmental factors as significant influences. Economic factors follow closely, affecting 33.5% of respondents, while social factors impact

5.6%. Cultural and political factors have relatively lower prevalence, affecting 4.3% and 3.1% of respondents, respectively. This data underscores the multifaceted nature of factors influencing arecanut cultivation, with environmental considerations taking precedence, followed by economic and socio-cultural factors. Understanding and addressing these diverse influences are crucial for effective agricultural policies and sustainable cultivation practices.

Table 9: General Problems based by Women Arecanut Cultivator

Sl. No	Problems	No. of Respondent	%
1.	Production	31	19.3
2.	Marketing	76	47.2
3.	Finance	42	26.1
4.	Government policy	12	7.5
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 9 outlines the general problems faced by women arecanut cultivators, with 161 respondents providing insights. The most prevalent issue is marketing, affecting 47.2% of respondents, indicating challenges in selling arecanut produce. Finance emerges as another significant concern, impacting 26.1% of respondents, highlighting financial constraints in cultivation activities. Production-related issues are also notable, affecting 19.3% of respondents, suggesting challenges in the cultivation process itself. Government policy concerns represent a smaller proportion, at 7.5% of respondents. This data underscores the multifaceted challenges encountered by women arecanut cultivators, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address issues related to marketing, finance, production, and government policies.

Table 10: Drought during Arecanut Cultivation

Sl. No	Drought During Arecanut Cultivation	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	132	82.0
2.	Yes	29	18.0
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 10 presents data on the occurrence of drought during arecanut cultivation, based on responses from 161 participants. The majority of respondents, 82.0%, indicate that they have not experienced drought during arecanut cultivation. However, 18.0% of respondents report encountering drought conditions during the cultivation process. This data highlights the prevalence of drought as a significant challenge faced by a notable minority of arecanut cultivators. Understanding the frequency and impact of drought events is crucial for implementing effective mitigation strategies to safeguard arecanut cultivation against adverse climatic conditions.

Table 11: Flooding During Arecanut cultivation

Sl. No	Flooding During Arecanut cultivation	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	117	72.7
2.	Yes	44	27.3
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 11 illustrates flooding occurrences during arecanut cultivation among 161 respondents. The majority,

72.7%, report no instances of flooding during cultivation. However, 27.3% of respondents indicate experiencing flooding during the arecanut cultivation process. Understanding the prevalence of flooding is vital for implementing effective mitigation strategies to address its impact on arecanut cultivation practices.

Table 12: Member in Farmer Association

Sl. No	Member in farmer association	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	103	64.0
2.	Yes	58	36.0
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 12 presents data on membership in farmer associations among 161 respondents. The majority, comprising 64.0% of respondents, report not being members of farmer associations. Conversely, 36.0% of respondents indicate being members of such associations. Understanding membership patterns in farmer associations is crucial for assessing the extent of collective engagement and advocacy within the agricultural community.

Table 13: Getting Assistance in the Times of Disaster from Government

Sl. No	Getting Assistance in the Times of Disaster From Government	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	98	60.9
2.	Yes	63	39.1
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 13 displays data regarding respondents receiving assistance from the government during times of disaster. Out of 161 respondents, 60.9% reported not receiving government assistance during disasters, while 39.1% indicated receiving such aid. Understanding the distribution of government assistance during disasters is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of disaster response mechanisms and informing policy improvements to better support affected individuals in times of crisis.

Table 14: Opinion about Government Policy towards Arecanut

Sl. No	Opinion about Government Policy towards Arecanut	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	104	64.6
2.	Yes	57	35.4
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 14 presents data on respondents' opinions regarding government policy towards arecanut. Among 161 respondents, 64.6% expressed a negative opinion, indicating dissatisfaction with government policies concerning arecanut. Conversely, 35.4% of respondents hold a positive view of government policies towards arecanut. Understanding public perceptions of government policies is essential for policymakers to address concerns and improve policy frameworks to better serve the interests of arecanut cultivators.

Table 15: Have you taken any help from horticulture department

Sl. No	Have you Taken any help from horticulture department	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	91	56.5
2.	Yes	70	43.5
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 15 depicts respondents' interactions with the horticulture department for assistance. Among 161 respondents, 56.5% reported not seeking help from the horticulture department, while 43.5% acknowledged seeking assistance from this department. Analyzing these figures is crucial for assessing the utilization and effectiveness of horticultural support services, informing strategies to enhance engagement and outreach to better serve the needs of arecanut cultivators.

Table 16: Opinion about Gutka Ban

Sl. No	Opinion about Gutka Ban	No. of Respondent	%
1.	No	94	58.4
2.	Yes	67	41.6
	Total	**161**	**100**

Table 16 displays respondents' opinions regarding the gutka ban. Among 161 respondents, 58.4% expressed disagreement with the gutka ban, while 41.6% supported it. Understanding public sentiment towards the gutka ban is vital for policymakers to gauge the effectiveness of such regulations and address any concerns or challenges arising from its implementation.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- The study analyzes various aspects of arecanut cultivation and its socio-economic dynamics with a sample size of 161 respondents.
- Demographic profile: Concentration in the age group of 30 to 39 years suggests a youthful population involved in arecanut cultivation.
- Housing types: Majority reside in "Pacca" houses, indicating relatively stable housing conditions.
- Educational backgrounds vary from illiteracy to technical and vocational training, reflecting diverse levels of formal education.
- Extensive engagement with village organizations underscores community participation in rural development initiatives.
- Income distribution reveals disparities in earning levels within the arecanut cultivation sector.
- Challenges include water scarcity, flooding, and financial constraints, emphasizing multifaceted obstacles.
- Factors influencing arecanut cultivation: Environmental and economic factors are predominant considerations.
- Specific problems encountered: Marketing difficulties and government policy concerns underscore complexities.
- Experiences with droughts, floods, and government assistance programs

provide insights into resilience and vulnerability.

- Opinions on the Gutka ban reflect divergent perspectives, indicating nuanced socio-political dynamics.
- Overall, the study offers comprehensive insights valuable for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in arecanut cultivation.

CONCLUSION

The role of women in Arecanut cultivation in Davanagere district, Karnataka, is fundamental, spanning all stages of farming, household management, and value-added activities. Despite their significant contributions, women often lack recognition, hindering their empowerment and potential economic impact. Acknowledging and empowering women in Arecanut cultivation can enhance rural livelihoods, promote gender equality, and foster sustainable agricultural practices. The survey findings reveal a diverse demographic of Arecanut cultivators, engaged in various village organizations and facing economic disparities. Challenges such as water scarcity, flooding, and financial constraints are prevalent, highlighting the need for targeted support. Environmental and economic factors significantly influence Arecanut cultivation, necessitating tailored interventions. Understanding these findings is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to develop effective strategies and support systems for Arecanut cultivators, ensuring their prosperity and sustainable development. Additionally, varying opinions on the Gutka ban reflect nuanced public attitudes, which can inform future policy decisions and public health initiatives.

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